

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

Neither for Nor Against L.D. 926

“Resolve, To Increase the Number of Days a Junior Hunter May hunt Deer”

SPONSORED BY: Representative ALLEY of Beals.

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator BURNS of Washington and Representatives: BATTLE of South Portland, BLUME of York, FECTEAU of Biddeford, GILBERT of Jay, GOLDEN of Lewiston, GOODE of Bangor, MAKER of Calais, TUELL of East Machias.

DATE OF HEARING: April 21, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Special Projects Coordinator at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 926**.

This resolve directs the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to amend its rules to allow a youth 10 years of age or older and under 16 years of age who possesses a junior hunting license to hunt deer on the days between Youth Deer Hunting Day and the residents-only Saturday of the regular deer hunting season, excluding Sunday.

Allowing junior hunters to hunt between Youth Deer Hunting Day and Residents Only Saturday will increase the number of antlerless deer taken. Should this occur, the Department would have to reduce the number of does killed by other hunters. This means that providing this opportunity for junior hunters will result in less opportunity for others. There are a number of ways the Department could achieve a reduction in the doe kill, but the most likely to be considered, at least initially, would be a reduction in the number of antlerless permits issued to other firearm hunters, as this is the most accurate method to regulate the kill of doe deer.

We would suggest that should junior hunters be given these extra days they be required to have an antlerless permit if they want to harvest an antlerless deer. This would allow the harvest of antlerless deer to be managed within the deer management system and support population objectives. This allows the Department to direct the additional harvest of antlerless deer to areas of the state where antlerless permits have been issued. It will ultimately result in less antlerless permits being available to other hunters but it will ensure the deer management objectives are supported. We would expect that the current laws and rules pertaining to supervision of a junior hunter and hunter orange requirements on youth day would apply. Also if the law passed there is potential for conflict between various user groups and the laws or rules that apply to each species they are hunting.

The other challenge for the Department is that based on the Administrative Procedures Act the Department is required to advertise the proposal, seek public input, make changes as appropriate, and then present the proposal to the Advisory Council for their consent. The process is designed to be interactive and a specific outcome can't be guaranteed. It would be very difficult for the Department to move forward with a proposal if there isn't public support for it. We would also point out that if the Advisory Council did not give their consent the proposal would not be put in place.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.